



The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

La Chambre de Commerce Canadienne à Hong Kong
香港加拿大商會

January 28, 2014

The Honourable Lynne Yelich, MP
Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular)
Room 546-S, Centre Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Canada

By mail and by fax: (613) 995-0126

Dear Ms Yelich

I am writing to you on behalf of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. We are one of the largest Canadian business organizations outside of Canada. Like Canada itself, the Chamber's strengths are built on the diversity of its members who range from blue-chip Canadian and well-known Hong Kong corporate names through to local start-ups.

Our mission is to promote commerce between Hong Kong and Canada and among our members. As Hong Kong is the most "Canadian" city in Asia, Canada's economy is one of the most international in the world, and Hong Kong is Canada's gateway to China, we aim to make both Hong Kong and Canada stronger, more competitive and more connected to each other.

We believe that a strong Canadian community outside of Canada benefits Canada both directly and indirectly.

It was therefore with concern that we noted recent articles both in Hong Kong's South China Morning Post (January 16, 2014 edition – see attachment) and The Globe and Mail (January 14, 2014 edition followed by an editorial on January 15, 2014). A number of our members have already asked us for further information.

We understand that this is not policy and take comfort in the statement of Adria Minsky, your spokeswoman, who was quoted in the articles saying: "Our policy is to provide consular services to all Canadian citizens, to the best of our ability". But I thought it helpful to set-out our thoughts on this important issue.

The Chamber's position is clear. To limit consular services for dual citizens who travel on a foreign passport or who live outside Canada for prolonged periods would be detrimental to the Canadian community in Hong Kong and the region. Many of our members would be covered by these criteria and would therefore face limited consular services if this was to become policy.





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Not only is the concept of a two tier citizenship difficult to implement in practice, it is potentially damaging to the interests of Canada's economy. Canada benefits from its diaspora of citizens. The Canadian community operating internationally needs to be strengthened not weakened. Particularly in Asia, relationships are an important foundation for many businesses. Canadians of all sorts are a tremendously rich source of contacts and networks for Canadian companies as well as Canadian products and services. They also bring investments into Canada. Indeed Canadian citizens abroad contribute in significant ways to Canadian companies who need to be growing their businesses overseas if they are to prosper globally. If there are added costs to providing services to all Canadians abroad, these are far outweighed by the benefits.

More generally, Canada's reputation internationally is a principled one. Unadulterated citizenship is consistent with this image and approach. By contrast, a qualified, calibrated, multi-leveled citizenship would reflect poorly on Canada's image.

As Canadians living abroad, we would very much welcome a visit by you to Hong Kong, a city with one of the largest Canadian populations outside of Canada – some 300,000 Canadian citizens.

In the meantime, we would appreciate your assurances as Minister of State that all Canadian citizens abroad remain on equal footing.

Yours sincerely,

John R. Witt
Chairman
The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

Attachment – SCMP January 16, 2014 Article

cc The Honourable John Baird, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honourable Edward Fast, MP, Minister of International Trade
Mr. J. Ian Burchett, Consul General of Canada in Hong Kong and Macao



CANADA

Red alert for Canadian dual citizens

Agence France-Presse
and Ian Young

Ottawa has been urged to limit consular help for dual citizens who travel on a foreign passport or who live outside Canada for prolonged periods, a plan that could cut services to the estimated 300,000 Canadian citizens in Hong Kong.

The proposal was described in briefing books prepared for Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird and Trade Minister Ed Fast.

The proposal specifically suggests reducing the services provided to citizens who do not pay Canadian tax or have declared non-residency, a popular option for breadwinners in Hong Kong who have families in Canada.

Most Canadians in Hong Kong are dual citizens, many returnee immigrants.

"Recent [international] crises have highlighted that many Canadian passport holders have limited connection to Canada [and] are seen by some as maintaining a 'citizenship of convenience'," the document posted online by *The Globe and Mail* said.

The document also notes that

consular officials had been asked to help Canadian citizens in 50 crises in 36 countries in one recent 15-month period alone.

In order to keep a lid on costs, it suggests "differentiating levels of service provided to dual nationals who choose not to use a Canadian passport when travelling or living abroad".

As well, it says the government could impose a "residency requirement or a tax contribution obligation as a condition to be eligible for assistance abroad".

Adria Minsky, spokeswoman for consular affairs minister Lynne Yelich, dismissed the brief, saying: "Our policy is to provide consular services to all Canadian citizens, to the best of our ability."

But the proposal enjoys the

support of David Mulroney, former Canadian ambassador to China.

Mulroney, who served as ambassador from 2009 to 2012, said via his Twitter account that "limiting consular services for expat Cdns whose links to Canada are tenuous is fair, smart, inevitable".

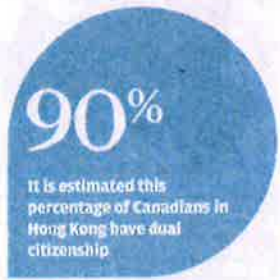
It is estimated there are 300,000 Canadian citizens in Hong Kong, of whom nearly 90 per cent are dual citizens and two-thirds of whom have family members living in Canada.

But neither the Hong Kong government nor Ottawa have any way of knowing the true number since returnees usually use their Hong Kong identity cards when passing through immigration.

Concerns about dual citizenship flared in 2006 when Canada had to evacuate nearly 15,000 citizens from Lebanon after fighting broke out between Hezbollah militants and Israeli soldiers.

It was the largest mass evacuation the country had mounted, at a reported cost of C\$85 million (HK\$605 million). A further 25,000 to 35,000 dual citizens living in or visiting Lebanon did not seek help.

► LIMITING AID 'UNFAIR' A3



DIPLOMACY

Limiting aid for Canadian dual citizens 'unfair'

Suggestion is an affront to human rights, says Hongkonger who spent 20 years in Toronto

Danny Lee
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A suggestion to limit consular assistance to Canadians living abroad who hold dual nationality has caused anger in Hong Kong.

The aim of the proposal is to save money by rationing universal assistance for citizens.

It would reduce the largesse and complexity of diplomatic services, a problem identified by bureaucrats.

The idea has upset K.C. Yao, who lived in Toronto for 20 years before moving back to Hong Kong last year.

She is one of an estimated 300,000 Canadian citizens in the city.

"Don't say you're not going to help us if you're overseas for too long. It's ridiculous," she said.

Yao said the proposal, contained in just six paragraphs of a ministerial briefing, gave few details on what kinds of services and rights a dual citizen would lose.

"They are not being specific when they talk about 'consular help'," Yao said.

"The fundamentals in this idea are basic human rights. They cannot differentiate between the rights of a citizen. Once we are naturalised, we are Canadian citizens.

"If they start differentiating, they will discriminate against citizens. It's not equal any more. As far as I'm aware, once I was naturalised, I became a Canadian citizen - that's it."

Yao said a solution would be to either give people with dual citizenship equal access to consular services or restrict Canadians to one passport, one nationality.

"But they can't go back on the law that lets citizens have dual



Lunar New Year in Vancouver's Chinatown. Photo: AP



They can't go back on the law that lets citizens have dual citizenship

K.C. YAO

citizenship and justify it," she added.

A law student at City University, Nathan Ma Hin-che, who moved back to Hong Kong from Vancouver to study, said he would not seek assistance from the consulate even if he was in trouble. "But for those who need it, I think they are entitled to it," Ma said.

Michael Hsu, from Vancouver, thought it a "bad proposal".

The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada think tank said in a 2011 report that 79 per cent of respondents cited trade and investment inquiries as their reason to contact the Canadian consulate in Hong Kong.

The other main categories of inquiries involved passport and citizenship issues.

A consulate spokesman was unavailable for comment.